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PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS

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PLAQUE IN CUBA.

Between March 5 and March 9 two cases¹ of human plague were reported in Habana, Cuba. The time was when such an announcement would have caused consternation to shipping interests and would have been a source of much worry to United States seaports.

There is very little, if any, reason for fear under the circumstances. The manner in which plague spreads is known. It is known that ordinarily plague spreads only through the medium of rats, and that usually wherever a human case occurs there has previously been plague in rodents. This knowledge has caused epidemiologists to pay really more attention to the existence of plague in rats than to its presence in man. It has caused them wherever cases in man occur to trap rats diligently in the localities of the human cases and usually within a considerable radius of such localities. These rats are trapped mainly for the purpose of laboratory examination, so that the existence and extent of the disease in rodents may be ascertained. The control of the disease is then largely a question of its eradication among rodents or of the rat-proofing of human habitations to such an extent that the sick rats and their infectious fleas can not gain access to man.

The disease can be effectively controlled where intelligent sanitary measures are employed. But fully as important as intelligent sanitary measures, and perhaps even more important, both in the prevention of the spread of the disease and in preventing undue interference with shipping and unwarranted fears in commercially related ports and countries, is sanitary honesty.

By this is meant giving frankly to those who may be interested or affected by the existence of a disease in a port prompt and full information regarding existing conditions. So far as plague is concerned, and the same is true of most other diseases, there is little to be feared when conditions are known. It is only in the absence of definite and dependable information, when people do not know existing conditions and consequently allow their imaginations full play, that the occurrence of a few cases of such a disease as plague gives anything but nominal inconvenience to social and commercial intercourse.

¹ Public Health Reports, vol. 29, Mar. 13, 1914, p. 641.

The United States Public Health Service has always received prompt and full information from the director of sanitation of Cuba, Dr. Juan Guiteras, on matters which might be of interest or affect the public health of the United States. Dr. Guiteras is keeping the Public Health Service currently informed of all developments. Under such conditions of cooperation the occurrence of a few cases of plague has not been and need not be a cause for alarm.

TYPHUS FEVER.

ITS PREVALENCE AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO QUARANTINE ADMINISTRATION.

The following vessels have recently arrived at United States ports with typhus fever on board:

At Providence:		Cases.
Jan. 1, 1914, steamer <i>Roma</i> , from Marseille.....		1
Nov. 30, 1913, steamer <i>Germania</i> , from Marseille.....		2
Jan. 4, 1914, steamer <i>Roma</i> , from Marseille.....		1
At New York:		
Jan. 17, 1914, steamer <i>Belvidere</i> , from Trieste.....		4
Jan. 18, 1914, steamer <i>Kaiser Franz Joseph I</i> , from Trieste.....		1
Jan. 27, 1914, steamer <i>Rochambeau</i> , from Havre.....		2
Mar. 4, 1914, steamer <i>Pannonia</i> , from Trieste.....		1
Mar. 8, 1914, steamer <i>La Savoie</i> , from Havre.....		1

Other cases subsequently occurred as the result of contact with the above cases. The nationalities affected appear to be principally Turks, Armenians, Syrians, and Kurds. It is believed that the following statistics justify a most rigid examination of steerage passengers from western Asia and eastern Europe:

RUSSIA.

Place.	Date.	Cases.	Deaths.
Moscow.....	Dec. 20, 1913-Jan. 31, 1914.....	34	3
Odessa.....	Jan. 3, 1914-Feb. 20, 1914.....	18	1
St. Petersburg.....	Dec. 13, 1913-Jan. 31, 1914.....	185	48
Warsaw.....	Oct. 25, 1913-Dec. 6, 1913.....	15	6

EGYPT.

Alexandria.....	Dec. 31, 1913-Feb. 18, 1914.....	68	12
Cairo.....	Dec. 16, 1913-Jan. 28, 1914.....	17	13
Beirut.....	Jan. 17, 1914-Feb. 21, 1914.....	11	7

TURKEY.

Salonica.....	Dec. 21, 1913-Feb. 21, 1914.....	24	21
Smyrna.....	Jan. 31, 1914-Feb. 14, 1914.....	5	5

SPAIN.

Madrid.....	Dec. 31, 1913-Jan. 31, 1914.....	4	4
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